



## Ruth Evangaline Coykendall

September 2, 1936 - December 15, 2023

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Ruth Evangeline Coykendall was born the second child of seven to Delbert “Bert” and Faith Kessi at Mrs. Rice’s Maternity Hospital in Corvallis, Oregon on September 2nd, 1936. The family lived in the town of Alpine, Oregon (near Monroe), but Ruth’s dad had ambition to own timber land and raise cattle. Having almost no money, he tried to buy timber land at property tax foreclosure sales, but he was consistently outbid. So, he decided to bid on foreclosures no one else wanted because they were not accessible by road. He was finally the successful bidder on timber land above Big Elk Creek in Harlan, Oregon.

Bert moved the family to Harlan on Feagles Creek to be closer to the land he had purchased, and Ruth spent some of her growing-up years living next door to her cousins there. The families didn’t have telephones, but they could communicate by yelling at each other from their back porches.

Starting at the most practical point on the closest gravel county road, Bert built a three-and-a-half-mile long private road up the ridge and back down the other side into his land on Sweet Home Creek. Upon reaching the creek, he picked

a spot where it passed through a large meadow and there, he built a log cabin. In the summers, Bert took Ruth and the rest of his growing family over the ridge to live in the log cabin where he logged and sold timber, cleared some of the land, and began ranching. During the winters, the family would move back down to Harlan until a more proper house could be constructed, which occurred about the time Ruth entered school.

As a result, Ruth and her siblings' childhood commute to school went like this: A one-and-a-half-mile hike up the private road through dense forest accompanied by Faith to the top of the ridge and then two more miles of walking on their own down the other side. Here, the children were met by a family friend with a car and driven four miles to Harlan which was the end of the school bus route. The bus then carried them eight more winding, gravel miles over another ridge to Burnt Woods where they would intersect Highway 20 for a final nine miles west to school in Eddyville. After school this process was completed in reverse.

Growing up in a logging family was a unique experience. Ruth's sister Mary learned to run a donkey loader for Bert one summer. This machine was a large engine combined with a spool and cable arrangement that yarded freshly cut logs onto the logging landing and then loaded them onto logging trucks. Seeing a teenage girl about to load their trucks caused some drivers concern. Similarly, Ruth was one of the relatively few women who learn to drive in a logging truck. Her younger brother David was assigned the task of teaching her to drive to the top of the ridge and back again. This is how Ruth received a graduate-level course in driving a stick shift.

Bert wasn't satisfied with the high school in Eddyville at the time, so he decided to send Ruth and her older sister Mary to finish their high school education at Canyonville Bible Academy (CBA) in southwestern Oregon. As a result, Ruth spent her Junior and Senior years far from home at boarding

school.

There was a large age gap between the first five and last two Kessi children. Ruth was in high school when the last two were born. These births caused serious health issues for Faith who now had a baby and a newborn to care for. So, Ruth took a year off from school to help her mother before returning to Canyonville.

Ruth's unusual high school experience caused a hiccup in her educational plans because Emanuel Hospital's nurse training center in Portland wouldn't grant accreditation to Ruth's CBA coursework. But Ruth overcame this by passing a set of standardized tests that allowed her to enter nurses' training and achieve her goal of becoming a registered nurse.

After receiving her nursing credentials, Ruth moved to Corvallis, Oregon, where she initially worked at Good Samaritan Hospital. But she soon transitioned to the Corvallis Clinic where she continued as an RN until retirement in 1987. Ruth had only been in town for about two weeks before she met her future husband, Ivan, at a college youth event held at First Baptist Church of Corvallis.

They were married on June 18, 1960, at First Baptist and then settled in Albany where they attended North Albany Baptist Church (now North Albany Community Church). At that time North Albany Baptist had just been organized and was meeting in the Grange Hall on North Albany Road. Ivan and Ruth would attend this church for over 30 years.

Ruth demonstrated a true servant personality by always supporting Ivan in his various business endeavors, much of which involved his contractor's license. Ivan also worked in the propane industry, managing a chain of distributors.

Ruth helped him there as well by becoming a registered lobbyist with the Oregon State Legislature and successfully working to pass a bill that exempted propane torching of peppermint crops from the controls on open field burning. This took two legislative sessions and four years to accomplish during which she worked with many statesmen, a few of whom would go on to become Senator Ron Wyden, Representative Earl Blumenauer, and Secretary of State Norma Paulus.

Like many young marrieds Ivan and Ruth acquired a pet dog which they named "Little Fellow". Ruth had grown up with farm dogs which were not allowed in the house while the Coykendall family dog always slept on Ivan's bed. This resulted in some serious negotiations, the result of which was that Little Fellow got to sleep in a wingback chair next to Ivan's side of the bed. Little Fellow was an intelligent and determined dog, and occasionally he would somehow end up in the bed with just his nose protruding from beneath the covers. But if Ruth rounded the corner of the hallway leading to the bedroom, he would always be right where he was supposed to be by the time she entered the room.

By the late 1960's, Ruth and Ivan had become avid snow skiers. They skied at Mt. Bachelor almost every weekend of the season. Then, in August of 1970, they welcomed their only child, Kenneth Todd, into the world. This put an end to the skiing, but it gave Ivan an eventual business partner.

They built their dream house in North Albany with Ruth helping to stain the exposed vaulted ceiling from scaffolding some 30ft above the floor. Moving in when Todd was just shy of two years old, Ruth would raise him in this house and continue living there the rest of her life.

When Todd met his future wife, Tammy, she was attending the same First Baptist Church of Corvallis where Ruth and Ivan had met. Todd and Tammy's

wedding in this church would fall on December 18th, exactly six months opposite Ruth and Ivan's anniversary. At that point, Ruth and Ivan returned to First Baptist and would continue attending there for the rest of Ruth's life. Ruth especially enjoyed their Friday night Small Group which she faithfully attended.

Ivan obtained a private pilot's license, and the couple purchased a small airplane. They would own this plane for about 25 years, and Ruth took flying lessons so she could more fully participate in the flying with Ivan. The couple would often fly back and forth to Paso Robles, California, a favorite vacation destination. Ruth had a really good radio voice and air traffic control would treat them better when Ruth was doing the talking. This was so obvious that the couple always had a laugh over it.

Eventually, the couple purchased a vacation home in "Paso" which they would visit for a week out of every month. They called it their "Sunshine House" and enjoyed using it as a staging ground to visit The Hearst Castle, Lopez Canyon, Cambria, Avila Beach, and many other favorite places.

In California, Ruth had her favorite beaches close to their house. Moonstone Beach at Cambria was the perfect place to park and watch the sun set into the Pacific Ocean. Another favorite was Avila Beach, one of the most perfect sunbathing beaches in the world with calm winds and almost no waves. Coming over the hill into Avila, Ivan and Ruth would often bet each other over whether the breakers would top six inches. They could never remember who was ahead on the score from one trip to the next.

When in Paso Robles, Ruth and Ivan attended Grace Bible Church in Arroyo Grande. It is a large church, but Ruth attended a very small and friendly Sunday school class where she felt right at home. Ruth also enjoyed the pastor's personal style of teaching from a small lectern which he was seldom

behind.

Ruth's servant's heart and faith in God showed through again and again in her life. She was always there at Ivan's elbow supporting him in all that he did, she was a faithful encourager to her son, and she returned to caring for her mother daily as Faith declined from Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's would eventually claim Ruth as well. But even to the end of her own struggle, Ruth's reliance on God's strength to overcome all challenges in life was still apparent in her pleasant demeanor and quiet smile. Alzheimer's takes our loved ones slowly and they call it "The Long Good-bye". But although we've had many years to say good-bye to our wife and mother, she will be sorely missed, and we very much look forward to seeing her again in Heaven.

Ruth was predeceased by father Delbert "Bert" Rush Kessi, mother Faith Evangeline (Hanson) Kessi, sister Faith Linnell Kessi, sister Mary Alice Dodd (Stanley), and brother David Henry Kessi (Emilie).

She is survived by husband Ivan Jerry Coykendall, son Kenneth Todd Coykendall (Tammy) and grandchildren Jonathan Todd Coykendall and Natalia Rose Coykendall.

She is also survived by sister Rose Anne Pearson (Anton "Tony"), sister Olive Nellie Stobbe (Stan), and brother Donald Zebulon Kessi (Frieda).

A celebration of Ruth's life will be held this July 4th for family and friends at the Harlan Chapel of the Valley in Harlan, Oregon.

# Tribute Wall

EL

“ 1 file added to the album *Wedding Photo*



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**EL** - January 08, 2024 at 06:03 PM

VG

*Ivan, I am so sorry to learn of Ruth's sad passing.  
Virginia*

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**virginia Glaser** - January 10, 2024 at 05:41 AM

TB

*My deepest condolence to Ivan, Todd and the rest of the Coykendall family on Ruth passing.*

*Tim Burdick*

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**Tim E. Burdick** - February 10, 2024 at 04:55 PM